



GEORGIA SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM DESIGNATION GUIDE

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE DESIGNATION HANDBOOK

This guide is intended to introduce the Georgia Scenic Byways Program to the public and to assist potential Scenic Byway sponsors through the designation process.

The Georgia Scenic Byways Program is a grassroots effort to identify, preserve, promote, and protect treasured corridors throughout the state. A Georgia Scenic Byway is defined as any designated highway, street, road, or route, which features certain intrinsic qualities that should be protected or enhanced. It is these qualities, which may include scenic, historic, natural, archeological, cultural, or recreational resources that give the byway its character and appeal.

SO, YOU THINK YOU HAVE A SCENIC BYWAY

The first step for anyone who has a route in mind is to contact GDOT and request additional information about the program. Copies of the Designation Handbook, the Application, and other byways-related fact sheets will then be furnished. These materials will give sponsors an idea of both the qualities a potential byway should possess and the work involved with pursuing its designation.

After reviewing this information, if a sponsor feels their proposed route would qualify as a byway, the next step is to contact GDOT to schedule a site visit. The State Scenic Byways Coordinator will meet with you to discuss the program, review the application, and tour the potential route. Other groups are involved in the Georgia Scenic Byways Program and will serve as resources to make the potential byway a success. Therefore, sponsors should also invite people such as a planner from their local Regional Development Center or Metropolitan Planning Organization, a local Department of Community Affairs representative, the local Department of Economic Development (Industry, Trade, and Tourism) representative and other interested parties to assist in the assessment of the proposed corridor.

DESIRED CONDITIONS FOR A SCENIC BYWAY

The initial site visit will be very helpful for the potential byway sponsor, other representatives, and GDOT. It provides sponsors the chance to ask any specific questions they might have about the program or the designation process. It allows participants the chance to drive the route and evaluate the intrinsic qualities and resources such as scenic views, historic sites, natural areas, and recreation opportunities. Any information the sponsor can provide about local history and culture will also be very helpful. Any potential issues or negative aspects of the route, such as billboards, commercial and industrial development, or visually unappealing locations can be documented and discussed. Sometimes, the most qualified route is not the most obvious one. In

such cases, coordination with the sponsor is the best way to find a possible byway corridor. After this initial visit the Byways Coordinator will inform you whether or not you have a potential Georgia Scenic Byway and the steps to be taken from there.

DEVELOPING LOCAL SUPPORT

Part of the Designation Application asks about support from, and notification of, governmental jurisdictions and community organizations. At this point in the designation process the sponsor should consider bringing some of the potentially affected parties together. One opportunity to get leaders together is by conducting a tour of the potential route. This will provide a chance to talk about the Byways Program, what it can do for the community, and the sponsor's vision of designating a byway. It is often easier to gather support of a Scenic Byway at these early stages of designation. Local citizens might be very familiar with the route, but not have a great appreciation for its qualities. Asking them to view their surroundings as an outsider newly discovering what this corridor has to offer can lead to critical local support. This will be a perfect opportunity for long-time residents to share information that will add to the story of the byway. Also, you may educate some of the locals who might not know the history or unique qualities of the area.

The Department looks favorably on applications that have supporting materials such as resolutions by local government entities or letters from community organizations. In addition, if your byway follows a route under the jurisdiction of a local government (a county road or city street) a resolution from the local authority must be submitted approving the application. A sample resolution is included in this document as Appendix A. Program Policy presently does not require a resolution of support if the route is on the state system. However, GDOT has recently been requesting resolutions to ensure the involvement of the local governments and the protection of the route based on land use planning.

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

Once a route is chosen, government and community support is secured, and resources and corridor issues along the route are assessed, the sponsor can prepare the application. The following summarizes the information needed for the application:

Applicant Information

Tell about yourself and the group you represent. This will serve as the Department's point of contact information for the byway sponsor.

Proposed Byway Information

This section lists the byway name and describes the route that the byway will follow. Official naming of the byway can be done later in the process. This is just the application, and the sponsors can finalize a name when they develop the Corridor Management Plan.

Intrinsic Qualities

What qualities does this byway possess? Check those boxes that apply. The byway may not include all of these qualities. All byways are different and will showcase their unique resources. Interest lies in defining the qualities along the route that make it special.

Statement of Significance

Sponsors present their byway story to GDOT. In this section sponsors should identify that the byway contains certain intrinsic qualities; and should detail those qualities and define why this route deserves designation. The sponsor may want to go through the qualities individually, compose a travel narrative to take us along the route, or wrap everything up into a byway abstract.

Jurisdiction

Byway sponsors must have the support of the local governments that have jurisdiction over the byway. At this point, the sponsor should have already talked with the local officials and received their support for this byway effort. This includes the local GDOT Board Member(s). Provide a list of names, how they were contacted, and any initial comments or concerns they may have.

Community Participation

This is similar to the Jurisdiction section. It will be very helpful to have the support of important local community organizations involved in the designation process. List those organizations here, and the similar information noted directly above.

Corridor Management Issues

This documents potential problems or opportunities which you see for this route and develops goals and objectives for the route. The sponsors should note what they hope to achieve and what issues they may face in meeting those goals. This will define the commitment, from both the sponsor and supporting groups, which byway designation involves.

Signature(s) of Sponsor(s)

This signature represents support for the proposal.

Maps

Sponsors will need to provide two copies of a map indicating the route of the proposed byway. These can range from GDOT county maps to locally produced GIS maps. To help GDOT's evaluation, please mark any existing facilities and points of interest along the route, and index them for reference.

Supporting Materials

Additional materials may be submitted that may help judge the qualities of the route or the level of community support. Examples of such materials may include brochures from points of interest along the route, letters of support from the community, and pictures of the potential byway. These materials would also include the local government resolution.

It is also recommended you include a narrated video of the proposed byway. The video should provide a tour of the route with descriptions of key interests and areas of existing developmental challenges to resolve.

Before sending the final application to GDOT, a draft version should be sent to the local RDC planner. They can then review the application and provide feedback on any changes or additions they may desire to be necessary. The RDC Planner can also provide assistance in preparing the application and supplying related information.

SUBMITTING THE FINAL APPLICATION

When GDOT receives the application it will be reviewed by staff members in the Office of Planning including the Scenic Byway Coordinator, the planner assigned to your area, the Special Projects Branch Chief and other management. Notification will also be sent to various GDOT offices and the applicable GDOT District office by the Office of Planning, informing them of a possible Scenic Byway. During this review process, a field check will be conducted to visually evaluate the route and its resources. As soon as this review is complete, GDOT will send a letter either approving the application or requesting updates be made to the application. On occasion, when sufficient resources or intrinsic qualities are not present along a route, an application will be rejected. If the application is approved, the sponsor will receive notification to begin the Corridor Management Plan development phase, which includes notifying property owners and owners of outdoor advertising signs. At this point we will again notify GDOT offices to inform them of the approved application.

THE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Corridor Management Plan (CMP), including significant public involvement, documents the vision for the byway and the steps to be taken to achieve the goals of promotion, preservation, and enhancement.

For a more detailed explanation of a CMP and the planning process, see our Corridor Management Plan fact sheet as well as the **Community Guide to Planning & Managing a Scenic Byway** produced by the Federal Highway Administration.

Developing the Corridor Management Plan

The sponsor will now document how to proceed with the development of the CMP. Items to be addressed are: Who will be involved in preparing the plan? Will a local entity be able to produce the document with their available staff or will the sponsor need to hire a consultant? When should a public meeting be held? A steering committee or another group may be invited to provide direct input in the development process of the Corridor Management Plan.

This first committee or group should be comprised of stakeholders that are interested in or affected by the byway and might contain representatives from the local governments and community groups. Before hosting the first public meetings, the sponsor should have a meeting with this group and try to develop the initial vision for the byway, if they have not already. In

this brainstorming session, a potential framework for the plan can be set up and can develop some broad goals and actions for the byway.

Documenting Public Involvement

The public involvement process is essential in every GDOT project, and designating a Scenic Byway is no different. Public meetings are vital for informing residents and property owners about the potential byway and collecting their feedback on the proposed plan. GDOT requires the byway sponsor hold at least two public meetings during the development of the CMP. Once the sponsor has developed a rough outline of their vision for the byway, they may decide to hold an initial meeting at which they discuss the broad goals they hope to achieve. This will be a good time to educate local residents about the Georgia Scenic Byways Program and the designation process. An important item to be stressed at this meeting is the only restriction imposed by GDOT after designation, the prohibition of new billboards. Any additional regulations would be at the discretion of the local jurisdiction. The sponsor should be prepared to address any questions, issues, or concerns about the Byways Program. After presenting this information sponsors should be able to assess the support for the route and should invite public comment on their goals. From this input, the byway group can then proceed with the full development of the plan.

It is important to follow GDOT procedures when notifying residents about the plans for a Scenic Byway and inviting them to the public meetings. Sponsors should attempt to notify, by letter, every property owner along the potential byway, explaining their efforts and inviting them to a public meeting. Sponsors should be able to obtain a list of these property owners from the local tax assessor's office. It is especially important owners of commercial properties be notified as they are directly affected by the billboard restriction. Appendix C provides a Receipt of Notification form which will allow the sponsor to keep a record of and verify all notified property owners. A copy of each form should be provided to the Department. In addition, an announcement of each public meeting should be placed in the appropriate local newspaper or other appropriate media. Documentation of this action must be included in the CMP.

At a minimum, a second public meeting should be held once the plan is close to being finalized. Here, byway sponsors shall confirm how they addressed everyone's concerns and suggestions. Of course, sponsors may have as many meetings as they feel necessary to ensure maximum community participation and to develop the best possible plan. If the route crosses into multiple government jurisdictions sponsors may need more localized meetings. The State Scenic Byways Coordinator is available to attend these meetings and provide information, if notified in advance.

In addition to the public, another key stakeholder in the Byways Program is the outdoor advertising industry. Because of the restriction on billboards, they will be particularly concerned with the rights of commercial property owners along a potential byway and whether or not they have been informed about the proposed byway and accompanying land use restrictions. The byway sponsor shall provide notification for the Executive Director of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Georgia, via GDOT (submit the notification to the State Scenic Byways Coordinator directly, for forwarding to the OAAG), to solicit their input about the proposed route

and to offer the opportunity to tour the potential byway with the sponsor. This may be best accomplished early in the process to more clearly define signing issues.

In addition, the sponsors should remain in contact with their GDOT Board Member(s), informing them about the designation efforts. Sponsors should also extend an invitation to the Board Member(s) to tour the proposed byway and experience its outstanding qualities. Remember, support of the Board Member(s) is critical as they introduce the resolution to the State Transportation Board for designation of the byway. An official letter of support from the Board Member(s) is required for the CMP.

The CMP will also focus a great deal on the byway's right of way. Utility companies are major players in how this property is managed. Try and include a representative from the local utilities in the early public meetings to discuss the CMP. They conduct maintenance and development along that right of way and may proceed with actions that are not conducive with the plan. Understanding a sponsor's intentions should lead to cooperation with their plans. GDOT District offices, including the utilities offices, are notified of your proposal and issues and will also try to accommodate as best they can.

Defining Corridor Management Plan Components

There are three main components to a Corridor Management Plan. These include the development of a byway organization, an inventory of intrinsic qualities, and the goals and objectives for the route.

The byways organization, whose mission is to implement the plan, will often develop from the original application sponsor or the group developing the plan. The structure for this organization and a list of responsibilities should be detailed and ready for implementation once the byway is designated. The State Scenic Byways Coordinator has information and publications available that discuss the formation of byways organizations.

The byway's benefits should be clearly defined. In the application, the sponsor was asked to check certain intrinsic qualities present along the route. These qualities were also detailed in the Statement of Significance. In the CMP, they should expand on that idea, travel along the route, and document all issues of significance. Sponsors might want to assign groups of people from the byway committee to travel the route to define all of the qualities of the route or of a particular category. For example, the sponsor could request members of the local historical society or preservation group to document all of the historic and archeological sites. The sponsor should clearly record this information on maps, photographs, or through a thorough narrative describing the resources.

The third component establishes a set of goals and objectives for the byway. This section details what the sponsors hope to achieve with each of the intrinsic qualities and resources they identified. These goals can be grand ideas, but make sure they are attainable. Either develop these objectives based on the categories of intrinsic qualities, or match certain resources or qualities to larger goals. Try to get as detailed as possible with the objectives and proposed

actions. In the future, when a sponsor is applying for grant funds, reviewers will want to know they have thought ahead and this proposed project is part of a master plan.

The Elements of a Good Corridor Management Plan

The Federal Highway Administration looks for the following qualities when evaluating Scenic Byways:

1. Maps identifying the corridor boundaries, location of resources, and land uses within the corridor.
2. An assessment of the intrinsic qualities and their “context” (the areas surrounding them).
3. A strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of those intrinsic qualities.
4. The agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the plan, including a list of their specific, individual responsibilities. Also, a schedule of when and how the sponsor will review the degree to which those responsibilities are being met.
5. A strategy of how existing development might be enhanced and new development accommodated to preserve the intrinsic qualities of your byway.
6. A plan for on-going public participation.
7. A general review of the road’s safety record to locate probable hazards and design issues, and to identify possible corrections.
8. A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians.
9. A listing and discussion of efforts to minimize uncharacteristic intrusions on the visitor’s experience of the byway.
10. Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising.
11. A plan to make sure the number and placement of highway signs will not detract from the scenery, but will be sufficient to help tourists find their way. This includes, where appropriate, signs for international tourists who may not speak English fluently.
12. Plans of how the byway will be marketed and publicized.
13. Any proposals for modifying the roadway, including an evaluation about design standards and how proposed changes may affect the byway’s intrinsic qualities.
14. A description of what you plan to do to explain and interpret your byway’s significant resources to visitors.

GDOT’s CMP Requirements

- Information on land use or zoning plans for the corridor.
- An acknowledgement of federal requirements regarding existing outdoor advertising in the corridor and the prohibition on new billboards along those routes designated as National Highway System, Interstate, or former Federal Aid Primary. (The State Scenic Byways Coordinator can provide the proper citations of these requirements.)
- Copies of the Certified Letter and return receipt sent to the Outdoor Advertising Association of Georgia.

- A statement providing for segmentation, which is the exclusion of corridor sections with industrial or commercial use that include little or none of the intrinsic qualities for which Scenic Byway designation is desired. Sections of highway to be excluded should be identified and a reasonable basis for the exclusion must be established.
- The CMP must be approved by the local jurisdiction having responsibility for its implementation prior to GDOT approval. This is often covered with a resolution of support from the local government(s). See Appendix A.
- A summary and documentation of the public involvement process followed by the sponsor. GDOT requires at least two public information meetings on the proposed byway and CMP.
- A provision for the placement of Scenic Byway designation signs on the local roadway. An agreement will be entered into between GDOT and the local government at a later date for the installation of these signs.
- A provision that GDOT does not assume any financial or other legal responsibilities by designation of the local roadways as a Scenic Byway.
- A letter of support from the sponsor's DOT Board Member(s). Since the Board Member(s) will be introducing the resolution for designation to the State Transportation Board, we want to be sure that he or she is fully aware of the sponsor's efforts and supports designation.

Once finalized, the sponsor will submit three copies of the CMP to GDOT for review. GDOT will forward copies of the CMP to the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Community Affairs for their review and comments. Once the sponsor has addressed the three agencies' assessments, and the plan meets everyone's requirements, the Office of Planning will send a recommendation for designation to the GDOT Commissioner for concurrence. If the Commissioner concurs, approval by the State Transportation Board will be requested. The sponsor's GDOT Board Member(s), who at this point should be familiar with the sponsor's efforts, introduce a resolution that officially designates the route as a Georgia Scenic Byway. Once again, we will notify appropriate GDOT divisions informing them of the official designation both prior to and after Board action.

DESIGNATED SCENIC BYWAY

One of the sponsor's first actions will be working with GDOT to provide signs for the byway. GDOT will develop a signing plan, supply the signs and posts, and will also install and maintain the signs along state highways. If the byway travels off the state highway system, the local government must install and maintain the signs. The GDOT District Office will formalize this responsibility through an agreement with each jurisdiction.

Part of GDOT's involvement is the designation of your new byway on the State Transportation Map and Scenic Byway websites. The map, distributed at rest areas, welcome centers, and other public areas can serve as the first step in marketing the byway. The Department's and National Scenic Byways Program's websites can provide information about byway facilities and points of interest to potential visitors. Please provide any information to the State Scenic Byways Coordinator, including photographs, which you would like posted to these websites.

Once designated as a Georgia Scenic Byway, sponsors may want to celebrate. They could mark this event and educate the public about the byway with a designation event. This might involve another tour of the byway and its resources. They may want to include stops at locations that exhibit the various qualities that make the byway special. Ideas could range from a vintage car tour, to a road race or cycling event. Also, at this event sponsors may want to have an official unveiling of the new signs. Coordination with the Department and our Board Members(s) is requested.

It is also time to get down to business implementing the CMP. The route has been designated a Scenic Byway, so what does that really mean? In essence, it means the sponsors have agreed to work toward enhancement of the designated corridor. To do this, it is time to put the Corridor Management Plan into use. The CMP should have detailed a future byway organization and its responsibilities, including steps to get that group up and running.

Consult the timeline established in the CMP to outline a plan of action. Identify objectives that are to be met first and who is responsible for them. Completing many of the actions put forward in the CMP may call for construction or planning projects. Funding for these projects is always an issue. The National Scenic Byways Grant Program has funds available for a wide variety of projects from the construction of byway facilities to the development of marketing plans. The State Scenic Byways Coordinator can provide a list of possible funding sources for potential byway projects.

CONTINUING BYWAY REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The State Scenic Byways Coordinator and/or the local Regional Development Center Planner will conduct a field check of the byway every two years or as needed to review the intrinsic qualities of the route and evaluate both their condition and the implementation of the Corridor Management Plan. The Department will review the proposed actions and the implementation timeline to make sure sponsors are continuing their support and maintenance of the Scenic Byway. An update of actions and a revised timeline may need to be developed at this time. As with the original CMP, this updated version will be reviewed by GDOT, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Community Affairs.

If a byway is not meeting Georgia's Scenic Byways Program requirements, the Department will work with the sponsor to address deficiencies and improve conditions. However, a significant degradation of the original qualifying conditions may result in the revocation of a portion or the entire corridor from Scenic Byway status.

SUMMARY

The Department encourages all prospective sponsors and local governments to utilize the process outlined in this guide to minimize the designation timeline while maximizing the benefits of the corridor and the Scenic Byways Program.

APPENDIX A

Sample Resolution

A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE (NAME OF BYWAY)

WHEREAS, the (byway sponsor) has identified a route that follows (description of route), which contains significant scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archeological, or recreational qualities;

WHEREAS, the (byway sponsor) is seeking to gain “Georgia Scenic Byway” designation for the route from the Georgia Department of Transportation;

WHEREAS, the (local government or business entity) has been advised on details of the Georgia Scenic Byways Program, the proposed byway, and the benefits of designation;

WHEREAS, designation of this route will support the objectives of this body to protect, promote, enhance, and interpret the outstanding intrinsic qualities of (city or county or region); and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Scenic Byways Program is a tool to encourage tourism and responsible development, bringing positive economic benefits and opportunities to this community;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the (local entity) having met and considered the matter in open session on (date), hereby fully endorses the Designation Application, for the proposed (name of byway).

FURTHER, the (local entity), in its endorsement of this application, acknowledges the efforts of the (byway sponsor) in undertaking this project and will support the completion of the designation process.

Dated this ____ day of _____, 20____.

Signatures

Seal

It also helps if you can add that seeking byway designation fits with the goals or actions of the group supplying the resolution. (Example: specific land use, preservation, or economic plans)

APPENDIX B

Common Questions about Scenic Byways Designation

What will the byway cost the sponsor and/or local government?

It depends. The most obvious cost is time, which includes working on the application, holding public meetings, and developing the Corridor Management Plan. As to funding, the local government may need to provide a match for a grant to develop the CMP or to implement a project once designated. Costs are hard to determine since some governments will take a more active part in developing, maintaining, and promoting a byway.

What kinds of property restrictions are required? Does the local government have to adopt zoning?

The only property restriction imposed by the Georgia Department of Transportation is the restriction on new billboards along routes designated as Federal Aid Primary, National Highway System, or Interstate. This essentially covers all state routes. The CMP is not a zoning plan but should reference any current land use or community plans, which would impact the byway corridor. If it is the community's goal to implement and/or enforce zoning or land use ordinances, then that should be detailed in the CMP. Ideally the community would develop some type of control measure along the byway to further the goals of enhancement, promotion, and preservation.

Is there any more maintenance required by local governments with a byway?

After designation, GDOT Maintenance staff will work with local jurisdictions to develop an acceptable maintenance plan for the byway. Of course local governments, if they desire, can choose to exceed this plan and develop their own plan of litter control, mowing, landscaping, etc. Local government(s) must maintain the byway's county or city streets along the byway. In fact, if local roads are to be included in a byway, the governing jurisdiction must submit a resolution of support with the application. Also, the local governments must approve the CMP, which must describe how the local government will maintain and operate the byway.

What kinds of grants are available for a Scenic Byway?

GDOT has developed a list of possible grant sources for byway plans and projects. Possibly the most likely source of funds to develop a Corridor Management Plan would be the Quality Growth Grant Program and Local Development Fund through the Department of Community Affairs. Other sources could include DCA's Regional Assistance Program, or grants through the US Dept. of Agriculture (Office of Community Development) or Appalachian Regional Commission. Once designated, a byway is eligible to apply for National Scenic Byways Grants. This program administered through the Federal Highway Administration, provides funding for a variety of byway related projects such as interpretive facilities, safety improvements, and marketing plans. These grants are awarded annually and applications are usually due during the summer. Upon notification by FHWA, the State Scenic Byways Coordinator will send sponsors a solicitation for National Scenic Byways Grants applications.

APPENDIX C

RECEIPT FOR SCENIC BYWAYS INFORMATION

DATE_____

INDIVIDUAL_____ FAMILY_____ MOBILE HOME_____ BUSINESS_____

FARM_____ NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION_____ NON-RESIDENT OWNER_____

BYWAY NAME OR ROUTE_____

COUNTY _____

NAME _____
(PRINT)

PRESENT ADDRESS

I, the above named, do hereby certify that I have on this date been made aware of the proposed scenic byway and the restrictions it will place on additional outdoor advertising. In order to preserve the integrity of the corridor, no new billboards will be allowed. I am aware that onsite signs are permissible in accordance with local sign ordinances.

(SIGNATURE)

(DATE)

WITNESS